

OF THE DELAWARE INDIANS

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on the skin; the operator with a small stick, rather larger than a common match, to the end of which some sharp needles are fastened, quickly pricks over the whole so that blood is drawn, then a coat of this powder is laid and left on to dry. Before the whites came into this country, they scarified themselves for this purpose with flint stones, or pricked themselves with the sharp teeth of a fish.¹⁸⁰ 304

The men tattooed their arms, legs, and faces with figures of snakes, birds, and other animals. These were marks of distinction and commemorated some worthy deed or heroic action. Occasionally the women tattooed themselves.¹⁸⁴ [532]

Both sexes painted their thighs, legs, breast, and face with streaks, lines, or circles. The usual colors were red, black, blue, and yellow.¹⁸⁶ Painting was mostly for festive occasions or for warfare. Women were more circumspect than men in the amount of paint used, since excessive or immodest painting was regarded as indicative of a wanton woman.¹⁸⁸ Both men and women wore numerous ornaments. Wampum in particular was a favorite; it was used as necklaces and wristlets and was hung from the ears. Sometimes it was woven in bands and worn on the head or clothing.¹⁸⁷ The helixes of men's ears were often pierced for wampum, metal, and other ornaments: 302

They frequently cut the helix of the ear,¹⁸⁸ leaving the upper and lower ends intact and then hang bits of lead to it so that it is stretched. Then this curved border of the auricle is bound with brass wire, distending it considerably, and decorated with silver ornaments.¹⁸⁹ [82] • 301

Besides wampum, necklaces of dyed deer hair, stone, native copper, and shell gorgets were worn.¹⁹⁰ One source depicted men wearing "the thumbs of enemies they have killed."¹⁹¹ Men carried tobacco pouches, often made from the whole skin of a loon, large enough to hold a pipe, tobacco, knife, a pair of depilatory shells, and other objects.¹⁹² 304

Manufactures.—The bow and arrow, the war club or tomahawk, and the spear were the principal implements of the men.¹⁹³ The type of bow used is unknown, except for one vague reference to wooden bows and arrows.¹⁹⁴ The triangular stone projectile points were fastened to the shaft by means of resin.¹⁹⁵ Projectile points were usually made of quartz, but chert, slate, shale, granite, sandstone, and argillite points have been found. Some may even have been made of fish bones.¹⁹⁶ Stone, pottery, and copper pipes were noted, both from early documents and 411 276

¹⁸⁰Heckewelder, 1881, p. 206.

¹⁸¹Zenberger, 1910, p. 12.

¹⁸²De Vries, 1909, p. 217; Holm, 1834, p. 119; Van der Donck, 1909, p. 301; Denton, 1845, p. 10.

¹⁸³Heckewelder, 1881, p. 303.

¹⁸⁴Van der Donck, 1909, p. 301; Pas-torius, 1912, p. 434; Lindstrom, 1925, pp. 196-97.

¹⁸⁵Heckewelder, 1881, p. 207; Lucken-bach, 1938, p. 107.

¹⁸⁶Zenberger, 1910, p. 12.

¹⁸⁷Abbott, 1875, p. 327; Neye and Pep-per, 1915, pp. 32-42; Holm, 1834, p. 119.

¹⁸⁸Holm, 1834, p. 119; Van der Donck, 1909, p. 301.

¹⁸⁹Zenberger, 1910, p. 68; Hecke-welder, 1881, p. 204.

¹⁹⁰Brinton, 1885, p. 53.

¹⁹¹Zenberger, 1910, p. 29.

¹⁹²De Laet, 1909, p. 48; Holm, 1834, p. 129; Zenberger, 1910, p. 29.

¹⁹³Smith, 1950, p. 119; De Laet, 1909, p. 57.

^x 796 times they failed trying with all their might to make fire with the fire drill one after another and had to resort to making it with flint and steel. He attributed such failure to the attendants having violated the rules of continence during the [83] Big House period. He himself felt that it was becoming more and more difficult for the Delawares to perform the ceremony on account of increasing moral laxity among the people.

Anderson corroborated the tradition of the earthquake and associated physical disturbances as accounting for the cause of the Delawares instituting the Big House Ceremony. He added that there was a tradition of falling stars occurring during the disturbance and also a tornado.* Anderson expressed the feeling of the Delawares that the performance of the Big House Ceremony was intended to avert physical catastrophes, saying that upon several occasions in the past the ceremony had been performed after a tornado in the country to preserve the people from another such visitation of anger on the part of the Creator.

It might be expected that the performance of the Big House Ceremony when sponsored by the Tortoise ceremonial group would differ in some of its particulars from what we have previously recorded. This investigation will undoubtedly have to be considered and it will be possible to do so should the Big House Ceremony ever be repeated by Frank Wilson who is a member of the Tortoise group.

Among the notes of information which Anderson made to extend our knowledge of details of the Big House Ceremony, [114] he called attention to an error in the color plate illustrating the interior of the Big House while one of the dances of vision recitation was in progress, in Harrington's monograph on Delaware ceremonies (*op. cit.* Pl. 6). The color plate shows the people in the Big House seated while the dance and recitation are going on. Anderson pointed out that the audience should be shown standing during the dance-recitation.

* *Gau'sze*, "whirlwind, tornado." Smaller gusts of whirling wind without the character of the preceding are called *ow'asze'se* in Delaware.

DIALOGY OF SYMBOLISM IN THE BIG HOUSE RITE

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In my former study of the Big House Ceremony I did not become aware of the significance that seemed attached to the fact that upon the center-post of the structure there were two faces carved on opposite sides, one facing the east, the other the west, and that also there were two fires, one on the east, the other on the west side of the center-post. These are evident symbols of duality and it becomes plausible to suspect, as did Dr. P. W. Schmidt, that the symbolism of duality in these features of the Big House might refer to sun and moon worship. Dr. Schmidt, in correspondence with me, also suggests that the two fires may represent the luminaries, and the double image representations on the center post a dual personality vested in the Supreme Being idea which in turn he proposes may be a fusion of the male and female concepts as tribal progenitors (Stammeselternpaar). We lack, however, supporting native testimony for the establishment of Dr. Schmidt's elucidation of a historical background for these mysterious symbols so far as the Delawares are specifically concerned.¹

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I was unable to take up this question with Delaware informants before the publication of my earlier study but since that time I have had an opportunity to discuss the point with Anderson. While he was unable to speak in positive terms of the dual symbolism of the two fires, two center-post images, two doors of the Big House, two paints, red and black, on the carved images, he offered a rationalization in attempting to explain the matter. This I consider extremely well worth reproducing as an example of Delaware explanatory thought on a point concerning which tradition in the tribe is not definite enough to be canonical. Our own speculation on the matter, when such fails to coincide with speculative attempts of the natives who themselves *profess* the principles of the religion in question, can hardly be considered as having equal weight with theirs.

¹ See also Dr. P. W. Schmidt, "High Gods in North America, Oxford, 1922," for a scholar's insight into the comparative history of Algonkian concepts of deity and religious systems, summarizing part of Vol. 5 of his earlier monumental contribution; *Die Ursprung der Götterideen*, Münster, 1929.

^x796 I would accordingly present Anderson's explanation of the
772 dual principle in Delaware ritual as being connected with the
●831 division of sex in the realm of life. Anderson pointed out that
the balancing of functions between the male and female
elements of human society was implied in the Delaware ritual
performance. He began by referring to the requirement that
there be an equal number of male and female attendants in
service during the ceremony; that the duties of the females
should coincide with and supplement those of the males; that
one fire, theoretically, was in charge of the female attendants
and represented their contribution to the worship, the other
the males; that a similar division extended through the Big
House, one door and the image on the center-post facing
that door "belonging" to the men, the other, the opposite to
women. He also pointed out in explaining the principle of
dualism that when the attendants swept the dancing path
encircling the two fires after each dance performance to purify
it, with the turkey wing fans, a male attendant starts sweeping
from the west door toward the east door and a female from the
east door to the west door on the opposite side; that when
the east door is reached by the male attendant sweeper and
the west door by the female attendant sweeper, each places the
fan-sweeper in a crevice in the logs above the door where he
or she stops. Furthermore, at the conclusion of the next
dance when the sweeping is repeated for the same purpose of
purification, the male attendant sweeps his half of the dance
path with the fan previously used by the female and leaves
this in the logs above the door on her side. She does the
same with the fan left over her door by the male attendant the
time before. Thus the two fans are relayed by men and
women attendants successively on opposite sides of the Big
House after each dance. One of the fans, moreover, is
associated with male attendants, the other with the female.
Anderson used this illustration to bring out his idea as implied
from the teaching of the old people that while there was no
definite doctrine of sexual duality taught in the Big House,
that the same might be implied as a hypothesis. He pointed
out another fact in demonstrating this likelihood which is

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clearly evident on the surface, namely that the two forked^{796x}
drum sticks, those of highly ceremonial significance used only⁷⁷²
from the ninth night of the ceremony to the end, bear carvings⁸³¹
of human heads, a male on one, a female on the other, the
latter having also the representation of female breasts below
the face. This leaves no doubt of latent trend of thought in
the basic symbolism of duality based upon sex in Delaware.
The two drum sticks in question are definitely designated
male and female.

I might mention also another piece of native reasoning^{796x}
along the same line in explanation of the black and red half-⁷⁷²
painting which is so characteristic of Delaware sacred coloring.⁸³¹
It has been assumed and with good reason that these colors⁸²²
represent the states of life and death, respectively red and
black. I would not discard this theory since it is one present
in the minds of some Delawares, but would rather find an
explanation for the confusion in idea of the black and red
symbols as an overlapping of several vaguely fused sym-
bolisms; one designating sex, the other life and death. The
whole question, as it now stands, amounts to a problem of
symbol interpretation in Delaware religion in which the sup-
position of sexual duality must be given primary consideration.

Reverting for a moment to Anderson's explanation of the^{796x}
two fire, two door, two center-post image peculiarity in the⁷⁷²
Big House arrangement, it should not be inferred that he⁸³¹
intended to point out that these were exclusively or definitely
sexual segregations or that they reflected duality in the con-
ception of deity. He also wished especially to avoid fixing
the idea that the two center-post images represented the
Creator. He tried to make clear that the two branches of
service represented by the men and women worshippers were
made convenient and kept separate in accordance with the
division into male and female functions by the dual arrange-
ments just noted.

The whole question of sex differentiation in Delaware
religion and natural thought is one which may have to be
worked out through evidences beneath the surface, perhaps in
almost forgotten but deeply significant principles of thought,

⁷⁷⁶since it is only hinted at in deliberate explanation by the
77A people of today, though preserved in the equipment and
● 831 furnishings of their worship.

An arrangement of symbols and functions associated with
sex in Delaware thought could be shown as follows.

MALE

FEMALE

ABSTRACT ASSOCIATIONS

The color red
life
east
day
right-hand side

The color black
death (the beyond)
west
night
left-hand side

BIG HOUSE ASSOCIATIONS

East half
east door
east fire
image of Great Spirit on east side of
center post

West half *
west door
west fire
image of Great Spirit on west side of
center post

FUNCTIONS AND PRIVILEGES

Balanced participation in all rites and dances	
Balanced ritual and dance leadership (approximate)	
Balanced sponsorship of ceremonies	
Balanced performance of offices as "attendants" (a'chae)	
Balanced dance-path sweeping	
Balanced reception of "payment" (sacrifice) of wampum for ceremonial services	
Balanced control of ceremonial equipment in east and west sides of Big House	
Conducting ceremonial hunt (symbol of animal economy as male sphere)	Preparing ceremonial foods (symbol of plant economy as female sphere)
Singing and praying aloud	Silent supplication
Giving ceremonial prayer-call	Occasionally giving prayer-call
Controlling harvest rite (Corn Harvest Ceremony)	
Dancing on outside of dance column in Big House (inside in Doll Dance and Buffalo Dance)	Dancing on inside of dance column in Big House (outside in Doll Dance and Buffalo Dance)
Formal recitation of visions	Recitation allowed only on last day of Big House Ceremony
Use of musical instruments (hide-drum and rattle)	
Moral "purity" during ceremonial periods	Moral and estamental "purity" during ceremonial periods

* Dichotomy of sex in the seating arrangements during ceremonies in the
Big House is subordinated to the classified grouping of the ceremonial divisions,
Turkey, Wolf, Turtle, and secondarily to which of the three groups is sponsoring
the celebration.

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626 ness was accomplished, not by a fear of authority, but by everyone's fear of wounding someone else's self-esteem and thereby laying himself open to aggression. In order not to antagonize another, the individual had to be very circumspect in his behavior and avoid showing his own aggressive motives. There were a variety of institutionalized techniques which functioned to forestall possible antagonism-arousing situations. They are not quarrelsome, and are always on their guard, so as not to offend each other," said Heckewelder, and Zeisberger made similar observations.³⁹

[83] Swearing was unknown (although obscenity was not tabooed).⁴⁰ Persons suspected of ill-doing were not accused openly; public or private disapproval was communicated by subtle allusions or by the recital of a "dream."⁴¹ Strangers and visitors were always treated politely; and negative replies to embassies from other communities were couched in ambiguous terms so that the matter was shelved rather than contended over.⁴² An elaborate code of etiquette governed the men's talk. "Their common conversation turns upon hunting or the news of the day. Matter that has no foundation in fact may be drawn into conversation, and even though all may be aware of this, the narration continues uninterrupted. They may laugh now and again but they will listen attentively. No one interrupts another. When one has finished another begins. They never put any one publicly to blush; they are polite to each other and enjoy being politely treated. They like to be regarded as worthy people even though they may be the opposite. They are pleased to know that they are liked."⁴³ Religious observances (such as the periodic obligation to give a dance for a sacred mask) were performed under an almost obsessive fear that negligence, by offending the supernatural owner, would call down an indefinite bot

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39. Heckewelder, 1819, pp. 145-146; Zeisberger 1778, p. 115-116.

40. Zeisberger, 1778, p. 85.

41. Zeisberger, 1778, p. 120.

42. Heckewelder, 1819, p. 150.

43. Heckewelder, 1819, pp. 103-104; Zeisberger 1778, 115-116.